POLICY

Low-income households who meet all State Emergency Relief (SER) eligibility requirements may receive assistance to help them with household heat and electric costs. Funding for energy services assistance is provided through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

A household may receive one SER payment for heat and one for non-heat electricity, not to exceed the SER cap, for the current fiscal year.

Payments are applied to the fiscal year cap based on the SER Service Request Date, not the Benefit Issuance date(s). As best practice, check the fiscal year cap(s) for each individual household member. Caps can be viewed in Benefit Issuance>Refunds>View SER Cap.

ENERGY HOLDS

Specialists may place a hold for the one approved heat assist and one approved electric assist allowed per fiscal year.

Do not place a hold on the account for any additional SER applications. This ensures compliance with the one-payment rule and prevents unnecessary provider holds or delays.

CRISIS DEFINED

In compliance with Section 2604 of the LIHEAP statute, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) must provide some form of assistance within 48 hours of receiving an application for crisis assistance.

Eligibility staff must contact the energy provider to secure a hold on the pending disconnect to resolve the immediate emergency and allow time to determine the household's eligibility for program benefits, if an automatic hold was not placed through MI Bridges.

An energy crisis is one of the following:

- An individual or household has a past due account or shut off notice on an energy bill for his or her household.
- A residential fuel tank is estimated to contain no more than 25 percent of its heating fuel capacity or has more than 25 percent and tank is locked by provider

- A stated need for household deliverable fuel or nontraditional fuel source such as wood, corn, cherry pits, etc.
- A notice that the balance of a prepayment account is below $100.
- A statement from a licensed service provider indicating the homeowner's furnace is inoperable and in need of repair or replacement.

LIFE THREATENING CRISIS DEFINED

In compliance with Section 2604 of the LIHEAP statute, MDHHS must provide some form of assistance within 18 hours of receiving an application for crisis assistance.

A household is considered to have a life-threatening energy crisis if **all** of the following criteria are met:

- The household is not protected by Michigan's Winter Protection Plan (WPP) or some other shut off protection/moratorium.
- The household has experienced disconnection of natural gas or electric service, has ran out of their household heating fuel, or the household has a statement from a licensed service providing indicating that the furnace is inoperable and in need of repair or replacement.
- Restoration of energy service(s) is medically necessary.
- The household does not have any temporary housing alternatives while the emergency is being resolved.

COORDINATION WITH MEAP

As required by Public Act 615, agencies receiving a grant to administer the Michigan Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) are required to offer services that will enable participants to become or move toward becoming self-sufficient, including assisting participants in paying their energy bills on time, assisting participants in budgeting for and contributing to their ability to provide for energy expenses, and assisting participants in utilizing energy services to optimize on energy efficiency.

A household receiving an energy-related SER payment, for services covered in this item, qualifies for MEAP services and assistance. The DHS-1419, State Emergency Relief Decision Notice, must inform the applicant that additional services are available through MEAP. Include the following comment on each DHS-1419 when an energy service has been approved or when there is a denial due to the household already receiving the same type of energy assistance in the current fiscal year:

> DHHS will only issue one payment for heat and one payment for non-heat electricity between October 1 and September 30 each year. Please call 2-1-1 to see what other assistance you may be eligible to receive.

Households that are currently enrolled in a provider-sponsored affordable payment plan (APP) through Consumers Energy's Consumers Affordable Resource for Energy (CARE) Program, DTE Energy's Low Income Self-Sufficiency Plan (LSP), SEMCO Energy's Monthly Assistance Program (MAP) or UPPCO's Energy Assistance, Self-Sufficiency & Education (EASE) Program, Great Lakes Energy (Pathways) Program are not eligible for SER energy services.

If a client is enrolled in a provider-sponsored program through Consumers Energy, DTE, SEMCO UPPCO or GLE for only **one** energy service, it may be possible for the household to receive SER assistance for the energy service not covered by the provider's program.

Information regarding MEAP, participating grantees and a list of providers who have opted out of participating in MEAP, can be found on the Michigan Public Service Commission's website under MPSC - Michigan Energy Assistance Program

COVERED SERVICES

Heating, Electric or Deliverable Fuels

When the group's heat or electric service for their current residence is in past due status, in threat of shutoff or is already shut off and must be restored, payment may be authorized to the enrolled provider. The energy request should be processed using the past due or shutoff amount, whichever is the most advantageous.

Payment must resolve the emergency by restoring or continuing the service for at least 30 calendar days. Current bills that are not past due or subject to shutoff should not be included in the amount needed.

When the account is in inactive status, the total service balance must be used to restore/establish service unless the energy provider verifies, they will accept payment of the past due or shutoff balance.

Example: Client applies for natural gas heat, shut off $145.00, past due $215.00. Specialist would process using the past due balance of $215.00 as it doesn't exceed the cap and is the most beneficial amount.

Example: Client applies for non-heat electricity with Consumers Energy, shut off $525.00, past due $685.00. Since the past due balance is more than the cap of $600.00, specialist will use the shutoff amount of $525.00 as it doesn't exceed the cap and is the most beneficial amount.

Example: Client applies for non-heat electricity and natural gas with Consumers Energy, shut off $525.00, past due $685.00 for non-heat electricity. Shut off $330 and past due 575.00 for natural gas. Since the past due balance for non-heat electricity is more than the cap of $600.00, specialists will use the shutoff amount of $525.00 and the past due of $575.00 for natural gas as these amounts don't exceed the cap and are the most beneficial amounts.

Note: SER may be used to assist a household who is enrolled in the shutoff protection plan (SPP) as long as all other eligibility requirements are met.

Payment may be made on a prepayment account for natural gas or electric services when the balance remaining in the account does not exceed $100. The SER benefit amount must not exceed the average billing amount for the past six months.

Payment may be made up to the fiscal year cap for the necessary charges to deliver a 30-day supply of fuel for households that heat with deliverable fuel (fuel oil, propane or coal). For fuel oil and propane, the SER should be processed using a quote from the provider for a 30-day supply or minimum fill. Payment for deliverable fuel will not be made if the deliverable fuel tank contains more than 25 percent of its heating fuel capacity. If, upon delivery,

the existing supply is greater than 25 percent of the heating fuel capacity, the SER payment shall not be made.

Note: Wood, including wood pellets, is not considered a deliverable fuel. Process wood and wood pellet requests using a 30-day supply or the client's attestation of a 30-day supply. Do not process wood and wood pellet requests using the fiscal-year cap.

Exception: For deliverable fuel, if the remaining fuel in the household's tank is above 25 percent but they have received a notice that their tank will be locked/disconnected or the tank has been locked/disconnected due to an unpaid balance, a policy exception can be submitted through Bridges to assist, up to the cap if all other eligibility requirements are met. See ERM 104 for policy exception requirements.

Deposit, Reconnect Fees/Deliverable Fuel Fees

Deposits, special trip charges, delivery fees including out of route (emergency delivery fees), pilot relights, pressure checks, leak test, reconnect fees, disconnection notice printing fee, and related charges such as storage tank (pig) installation, delivery or rental can be paid if they are necessary to prevent an emergency and are required by the provider. These fees are **not** included in the fiscal year cap but do have a dollar limit per occurrence.

Note: Delivery fees can be paid for deliverable fuels, wood, and wood pellets.

SERVICES NOT COVERED

Do not authorize energy services to pay for:

- Repair or protection plans.
- Unauthorized or illegal use.
- Bankrupt accounts.
- Account that is enrolled in the Winter Protection Plan (November 1 to March 31).
- Cooking gas; see ERM 302, Utility Services.

- Service used in businesses or non-residential buildings or facilities such as rental units, garages, stores, or non-residential farm uses. When a bill represents combined residential and nonresidential or business usage, pay only the residential portion if the utility can provide an approximate breakdown showing the residential use portion and the group applying for energy services pays the nonresidential costs. In the case of a client who works in their own home, if the bill is in the client's name and the service address is the same as the client's residence address, it is considered a residential bill and payment may be authorized. If the bill is in the name of the client's business, it is considered a commercial bill and payment cannot be authorized.

  Exception: Payment shall not be issued for energy services when the usage is in violation of the federal law.

  Example: A client has requested assistance for an electric shut-off which includes costs associated with manufacturing medical marijuana. The client is not eligible for SER since federal law, 21 U.S.C. 841(a) prohibits the manufacturing of marijuana.

- Air conditioning billed separately from residential electric service.

- Electric vehicle charging service billed separately from residential electric service.

- Common meter/service situations. This occurs when one meter or heat/electric unit services more than one residential unit or residence. If the energy provider can verify the group's actual usage and the provider will accept the SER group's portion and maintain services, payment may be made in full.

- Back rent when the client has a judgment which includes money owed on a heat or electric bill. This is considered a relocation service, not an energy service.

  Example: A client has requested payment for eviction which includes money owed on a heat or electric bill. The landlord has paid the bill up to date with the provider, but the client has not paid the landlord for the heat/electric, which is part of the rental agreement. The heat/electric payment would be included as part of the total amount needed to prevent eviction.

- Payments to residential landlords, residential management companies, billing service agencies, or collection agencies are not eligible to receive emergency service (ES) or SER funds, as they are not the actual service provider. Examples of third-party billing companies who are not eligible providers include:
    - Universal Utilities.
    - D & B Billing Services.
    - Electrical Inspection Company.
    - Infinity Billing Enterprises.
- Secondary household fuel types. Payment may only be approved for the primary heating source.
- Deposit for new service when the energy provider is regulated by the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC).
- Late payment charges when the energy provider is regulated by the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC).

Note: Per MPSC billing rules, a regulated utility shall not assess a late payment charge against a customer whose payment is being made by MDHHS. The 2 percent late fee should **not** then become the responsibility of the customer but should be reduced to zero for any payments made by MDHHS through State Emergency Relief (SER) or the Michigan Energy Assistance Program (MEAP).

For a list of regulated Gas Utilities go to MPSC - Gas Utilities in Michigan

For a list of regulated Electric Utilities go to MPSC - Utility Addresses & Contacts (michigan.gov)

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The client must complete the DHS-1514, Application for State Emergency Relief, the MDHHS-1171, Assistance Application, along with the MDHHS-1171-SER supplemental form or submit an application electronically through MI Bridges.

- All household members are included in the SER group.
- Income of all household members is budgeted.
- Assets of all household members are budgeted.

- Income verification used for current eligibility for any other MDHHS administered program may be used, if available. If not available, income must be verified.

- There is no income copayment for energy-related services. The household income must be at or below the LIHEAP income limit for the group to qualify for SER; see *Exhibit II - SER Income Need Standards for Energy/LIHEAP Services* in ERM 208.

- The bill must be connected to the group's current address. If the bill, including old or transferred balances, must be paid to start or maintain service at the current or new address, payment may be authorized up to the fiscal year cap, as long as the payment resolves the emergency.

- A past due or shut off connected to the group's current address when heat or electric is included in rent or service is disconnected and requires restoration. If the payment is required to prevent disconnection or restore service, payment may be authorized up to the fiscal year cap, as long as the payment resolves the emergency. Payment must be made to the energy provider, not the landlord.

- The household fuel type must be correct for the type of payment requested.

- The requested amount in Bridges must match the amount on the past due or shut off notice/bill, or the 30-day supply or minimum fill amount needed for deliverable fuel. If there is a discrepancy in the amount needed to resolve the emergency, there must be documentation in the case record.

  Note: The requested amount for a prepayment account must equal the group's average billing amount for the past 6 months.

- Verification that the required copayment(s) has been paid must be obtained prior to the MDHHS payment being issued. All other non-financial eligibility requirements must be met.

- Payment can only be made to an enrolled energy provider, see ERM 401, Payments.

MULTIPLE SER SERVICES

Same Provider

When processing multiple SER services with the same provider, payment for one service cannot be approved until all requirements are met (copay, verifications, etc.). Release of one payment without the other will result in a partial payment to the account and not resolve the emergency.

Example: Client applies for shut off with non-heat electric and water/sewer with LBWL (Lansing Board of Water and Light). Shut off amount total is $925.00. Non-heat electric balance is $485.00, water/sewer balance is $440.00. Non-heat electric is approved for the full amount of $485.00 with no copay. Water/sewer is approved for cap of $350.00 with a co-pay of $90.00. Since this is a combined account with the same provider, the co-pay must be verified before the non-heat electric payment can be authorized.

Example: Client applies for shut off with non-heat electric and natural gas with Consumers Energy. Shut off amount total is $1180.00. Non-heat electric shut-off balance is $325.00, natural gas shut-off balance is $855.00. Non-heat electric is approved for the full amount of $325.00 with no copay. Natural gas is approved for the full cap of $500.00 with a co-pay of $355.00. Since this is a combined account with the same provider, the co-pay must be verified before the non-heat electric payment can be authorized.

Different Providers

When processing multiple SER services with different providers, approval for one service can be paid/released without the need for the other service requirements being met. Since the services are with different providers, one does not affect the other's eligibility and therefore, payment can be paid without the requirement of the co-pay, verification, etc. for the other service.

Example: Client applies for shut off with non-heat electric with Consumers Energy and water/sewer with county. Non-heat electric shut off is $485.00, water/sewer shut off is $440.00. Non-heat electric is approved for the full amount of $485.00 with no copay. Water/sewer is approved for cap of $350.00 with a co-pay of $90.00. Since the services are with different providers and neither affect each other, the non-heat electric payment can be approved

and released. The water/sewer would require the copay to be verified before it can be authorized.

Example: Client applies for shut off with natural gas with DTE and rent to prevent eviction. DTE shut off amount total is $365.00. Court order shows rent owed is $1325.00. DTE shut off is approved for $365.00, however rent to prevent eviction requires verification of six-month payment history. Since the services are with different providers and neither affect each other, the natural gas payment can be approved and released. The rent to prevent eviction would pend for verification of six-month payment history.

Good Cause

The required payment amount for both heat and non-heat electricity is $0; therefore *Good Cause* is granted for each energy-related service request. A SER group is not required to make payments in the 6 months prior to the SER application for an energy-related service request in order to be eligible for energy assistance.

The *SER Required Payments - Details* screen should be completed as follows for any of the 6 months prior to the SER application month:

The dropdown value next to the applicable SER service type(s) should contain a **no** response to the question, “Did the client have an obligation to pay for this month?”

Decision Notice

The DHS-1419, Decision Notice, must be sent to the client for every energy request. The notice must include the required payment amounts to inform the client of their obligation; see ERM 103, Application Procedures.

The DHS-1419, State Emergency Relief Decision Notice, must inform the applicant that additional services are available through MEAP. Include the following comment on each DHS-1419 when an energy service has been approved or when there is a denial due to the household already receiving the same type of energy assistance in the current fiscal year:

> DHHS will only issue one payment for heat and one payment for non-heat electricity between October 1 and September 30 each year. Please call 2-1-1 to see what other assistance you may be eligible to receive.

Note: The DHS-1150, Application Eligibility Notice, may be used to notify a client of a denied SER request and must be issued in instances where no DHS-1419 is generated through Bridges.

SALES TAX ON DELIVERABLE FUELS

Payments for deliverable fuels are either exempt or non-exempt from sales tax. When emailing the provider for an estimate/quote, specialist **must** instruct the provider to list DHHS as the purchaser of propane on the estimate/quote with the client's address for the service delivery. The specialist must email the DHS-849 to the propane provider upon approval of SER benefits.

Follow the below to determine when to include or not to include sales tax:

- Exempt from sales tax:
  - If the estimate/quote/final invoice is received in the name of DHHS, with the client's address listed as the delivery service, it is tax exempt.
  - If the final invoice is received in the name of the client, not in DHHS' name, but the DHS-849 is attached, it is tax exempt.
  - If the final invoice is received in the name of the client, not in DHHS' name and no DHS-849 is attached, but the worker's email request to the provider clearly instructed the provider to list DHHS as the purchaser of the propane, it is tax exempt. Email correspondence **must** be uploaded to ECF for verification.
- Non-exempt from sales tax:
  - Only when the client submits the quote/invoice, it's in the name of the client, and no DHS-849 is returned with the final invoice is payment eligible for sales tax.

Note: The DHS-849 informs the provider that the service is tax exempt, therefore when returned to DHHS, it is acknowledgment that the provider received the notice of exemption status for the deliverable fuel.

TRIBAL PAYMENTS

Indian tribal organizations may receive LIHEAP funds directly from the federal government to help with heat, electric and furnace repair bills. Payments are made available by the tribal organization to the members of the tribe, usually in the form of direct payments to the provider. The tribal members may apply for SER, but payments are limited to the highest amount available either from MDHHS or the tribal organization.

The specialist must notify the program office, via an email to: Policy-SER@michigan.gov, of the tribal LIHEAP payment so the fiscal year cap can be adjusted.

To avoid duplicate payment, verify any tribal LIHEAP authorizations. Notify Front End Eligibility (FEE) if necessary.

VERIFICATION OF NEED AND COST OF EMERGENCY

Verify past due status, threatened shutoff or the need for reconnection of natural gas or electricity, by using the online portal or contacting the energy company. For SER groups who have a prepayment account, verify that their prepayment balance does not exceed $100. Contact can be in the form of a written notice, telephone call, fax, email or information on the provider's secure website. Documentation of this verification must be uploaded and saved into the ECF.

Note: Verification of a past due or shut off or service disconnection when heat is included in rent must be obtained through the online portal or by contacting the energy company. Landlord statement or invoice from landlord is not acceptable.

Accept the group's statement as verification of need for wood and other non-metered heating sources. For deliverable fuel, a quote from the provider for a 30-day supply or minimum fill is required. Release of payment under Benefit Issuance MUST not be completed until the final invoice has been received and uploaded to ECF. Household fuel type on the Household Information Page and Household heating source on the SER Service Request Details MUST be entered correctly to match the service being authorized.

A bill must be obtained before authorizing payment. A fax, email or scanned copy of the bill received directly from the

provider is acceptable as long as it includes all the pertinent information that would be included on the actual bill. For deliverable fuel, the bill must indicate the delivery is for a 30-day supply or minimum fill.

Exception: The specialist may only use a DHS-223, Documentation Record, for deliverable fuels, wood and other non-traditional heating source estimates or to clarify discrepancies. The DHS-223 may not be used as a verification source for natural gas, non-heat electric or other energy types that receive monthly statements and shut off notices. Documentation on the DHS-223 must include:

- Date.
- Client name and case number.
- Amount needed to resolve the emergency.
- Name on account.
- Any other pertinent account information.
- The name of the person at the utility company who provided the information along with the signature of the MDHHS staff person obtaining the information.

Photocopies of bills are not accepted.

The original bill must be uploaded or scanned into the ECF; photocopies are not accepted. A scanned copy/fax of original bill, email or DHS-223 must be uploaded to the ECF.

PAYMENT LIMITS

Effective October 1, 2025

Energy Type	Service Code	Fiscal Year Cap
Natural gas and wood	63	$600
Deliverable fuel (fuel oil, propane, coal)	63	$900
Other fuel (kerosene, corn pellets, cherry pits, etc.)	63	$600

Energy Type	Service Code	Fiscal Year Cap
Residential electric (not used for heat)	65	$600
All-electric home (combined heat & residential use)	64	$900
Deposits/fees for energy service	26 (heat)/27 (electric)	$200 per occurrence

Authorizations

Before authorizing the department's portion of the cost of services, verify that the non-citizen proration and/or client contribution have been paid by the client or will be paid by another agency. Verification from a MEAP grantee that the household will be enrolled into an energy provider's Affordable Payment Plan (APP) can be used to satisfy the household's client contribution.

Approve payment if it resolves the emergency and if the energy provider will maintain or restore service for at least 30 days. Do not authorize any energy services payment that will not resolve the current emergency, even if the payment is within the fiscal year cap.

Note: The MDHHS payment is not reduced when another agency is paying more than the required copayment.

Payments are applied to the cap of the client. Client is defined as the applicant for or recipient of SER and includes all group members. Every individual in the group who benefits from the payment, including minor children, will have payments applied to their individual cap. The payments applied to the cap follow the individual even if they move from one household to another.

In instances where a group member has met the cap, but the rest of the household has not received an energy-related SER payment, an exception request should be submitted through Bridges. This will allow the household to qualify for additional MEAP services.

Example: A SER payment is made for heat on the mother's case. The payment applies to the mother's cap and to all the children who

live with her. One child leaves the home and moves in with the father. The father then applies for SER for heat. The child's cap is applied to the father's eligibility determination because the child has benefited from the previous heat payment.

Bridges tracks all energy service authorizations and cap limits for each individual. In order to view the payment caps, complete an inquiry in Bridges for each SER group member. Caps can be viewed in *Benefit Issuance*>Refunds>*View SER Cap*.

ACCESSING CLIENT ENERGY ACCOUNT INFORMATION

On-line Account Access

DTE – DTE Energy Assistance Portal

URL: DTE - Agency Portal (dteenergy.com)

Consumers Energy – Consumers Energy Portal for Agency Self Service (CE PASS)

URL: Login (consumersenergy.com)

Michigan Gas Utilities- MGU

URL: Select a New Customer (michigangasutilities.com)

Lansing Board of Water and Light

URL: Sign in · Starter Portal (powerappsportals.us)

MDHHS local office security coordinators and their backups are the designated account administrators for DTE and Consumers Energy online access. Security coordinators are responsible for enrolling staff and maintaining appropriate access to DTE Energy Assistance Portal and CE PASS to determine SER eligibility. MGU is responsible for enrolling staff and maintaining appropriate access, contact CAC@michigangasutilities.com for any questions.

Changes to local office security coordinators should be reported directly to the SER policy mailbox, do not contact DTE or Consumers Energy directly with these requests.

- All MDHHS staff and managers who intend to use online access must provide all necessary profile information requested by the energy provider, which may include personal information.

- MDHHS staff must be trained and supplied with a user ID and password prior to use.

- All trained staff and managers are allowed to access the website to obtain payment history, other account information, and to allow a confirmation of payment.

- MDHHS staff **MUST** use the account statement provided on the website in lieu of an actual bill. A copy of the online statement must be uploaded to the ECF by the specialist. The DHS-849 must be local printed to move from pending correspondence to history.

- MDHHS staff MUST submit payment confirmation via the website. The commitment requires the approved DHS-849 invoice number and amount. If the commitment is not entered for DTE, the 30-day eligibility hold placed will remain in lieu of an additional 30 days from the payment date.

Example: Client applies on 9/7/2023, 30-day hold is placed through 10/6/2023. Worker processes SER on 9/8/2023 which results in a copay. Client makes copay on 9/12/2023 and provides verification. Worker processes copay on 9/13/2023, releases DHHS payment and adds commitment to DTE online portal. A new 30-day hold is placed through 10/12/2023. Client cannot be put into shut off before 10/12/2023.

- An application for assistance includes a disclaimer to allow access to account information with energy providers via fax, email, and phone or company website. When the client signs the application (which is required for all SER energy requests), they are giving MDHHS staff permission to access the site. No separate release of information is required.

- Energy providers' websites are to be used for business purposes only, are not for unauthorized or personal use and are monitored. Providing false information for a user profile or conducting personal activity can result in disciplinary actions.

LEGAL

Mich Admin Code, R 400.7001 et seq.